



City of Milford, Connecticut

- Founded in 1639 -

Benjamin G. Blake
Mayor

City Hall
110 River Street
Milford, CT 06460

Testimony of Benjamin Blake, Mayor City of Milford

Appropriations Committee

On behalf of the City of Milford, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to provide comments regarding the Governor's Proposed FY 2018-2019 Budget.

As a political science major my freshman year in college, I studied David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's book Reinventing Government. This 1992 work made many in the public sector sit up and take notice. Osborne and Gaebler introduced the "new" concept of citizens as customers and argued that this customer-service model should be applied to better deliver government services. This approach focused on results and looked to promote competition within government in order to meet the needs of the customer/taxpayers most expediently. Many of the positions advanced in Reinventing Government have been debated over the years, but one in particular sticks with me - that state and local budgeting has, for too long, discouraged success and rewarded failure. When a state or municipal department develops cost effective ways to deliver services for less, the budget process has traditionally imposed a penalty, namely cutting that budget rather than rewarding the entrepreneurial spirit or favoring the beneficial measure. Rarely is an improvement used as a means to further invest in behavior that might be shared across departments. This budgeting model discourages innovation and encourages bad management by incentivizing departments to "use up" allocated dollars or face a budget reduction.

As I review the Governor's recommendations, his budget appears to reward poor management while penalizing the successes of prudent local budgeting. The proposal sends a loud and unambiguous message that if a municipality works hard and makes tough choices, if it innovates and finds new revenue streams to offset growing costs, if the city sacrifices and carefully prioritizes its resources, and if it responsibly cultivates an efficient operation, then the State of Connecticut will come down on said city like a ton of bricks.

Milford is a blue collar, working class community where 32.72% of our households are low and moderate-income. We do not have the disposable income of some of the wealthy Connecticut towns. Up until now, we have managed the very real needs of our diverse city through careful planning and fiscal thrift. While other communities frittered away money on frills and short-term fixes, Milford chose to fund substantive projects that grow our public infrastructure and encourage investment in our tax base. It now appears we have been victimized by our many years of conservatism and prudent management. More than any other middle-class town in the State, Milford is punished by the Governor's budget proposal. The suggested cuts to Milford would strike a major blow to our seniors and students, who have already sacrificed for so many years. If adopted, the proposal would bring draconian cuts in services and an unimaginably huge tax increase upon unsuspecting Milford residents. Therefore, I humbly and respectfully ask that this Committee review the local impact on our residents and consider a proposal that better serves all of Connecticut. A philosophy which rewards bad behavior and punishes good would not be tolerated in our own homes and should not be a model for state budgeting.

Thank you for your courtesy and consideration. I appreciate the good work of this Committee and I encourage you to adopt a budget that moves all towns in Connecticut forward.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Blake', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Benjamin G. Blake